

hope to have Gray-- West -- Ashton (1 vol.) out in the fall of '43 and Miss Berry (1 vol.) with it."

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#### NEWS FROM ENGLAND

Our sympathy goes out to D. Nichol Smith (Oxford) whose son in the air force has been reported missing in Libya. We devoutly hope better news will come soon.

May we express our deep regret also at the news of the death of Lady Charnwood, the wife of the author of the life of Lincoln. The Mistress of Stowe House in Lichfield has been long known as an ardent Johnsonian, and has done much to help in reviving the Annual Birthday celebration on Sept. 18. Your editor vividly remembers the annual dinner of the Johnson Society of London, at the Criterion Restaurant in June 1939, when Lady Charnwood graciously presided. Some of those present had audibly wondered what Dr. Johnson would have thought of a woman being in the chair, and Miss Edith Morley commented:

"There is a line in Milton which always comes into my head when I think of Johnson. He says 'That which before us lies in daily life is the true wisdom.' That seems to epitomise Johnson's attitude to life, and perhaps his attitude to literature. If I might associate with that quotation the name of our Chairman I do not think that I should be doing her an injustice either. It is not only by that which she has written, not only by that which she has done for Dr. Johnson in other ways, but also by her attitude to life and to conviviality, and so I say that she has very well merited the position that she now holds."

Surely this is a fitting tribute to a great woman.

R. W. Chasman writes to dispel any misconception that may be caused by the account in our last issue

of his state and prospect. He has seldom if ever enjoyed better health, and regards himself as an active, if not (in the existing circumstances) a very useful member of society. His life is indeed largely 'made up of little things'; but that is Johnson's definition of life. He has not forgotten what 'three hours a day stolen from sleep and amusement will produce' (Johnson to Tom Warton, 28 Nov. 1754).

Since 1 August he has been a Fellow of Magdalen 'by special election' ad edendas epistolas Johnsonianas necnon reliquias Gordonianas -- one of his duties being to see through the press some of the unpublished MSS. of his old friend the late President of Magdalen. One of these is already in type: the Watson (Sulgrave Manor) Lectures on Anglo-American Literary Relations. This deals rather more with the 17th and 19th centuries than with the 18th. But there are not a few references to Johnson and his contemporaries.

H.W. Bromhead writes from Streatham that at the September meeting of the Johnson Society of London they are to see a splendid set of lantern slides dealing with the Life of Dr. Johnson, which the new secretary, O. D. Savage, means to use in lecturing to troops. For bibliographical record it might be well to mention that Bromhead's recent paper on "Dr. Johnson and Dr. Dodd" has been printed in the St. Leonard's, Streatham, Parish Magazine.

Bromhead in his letter adds: "Meeting someone who had been to Bath since it was 'blitzed' I enquired specially about the condition of Gay Street. My informant did not know No. 8 [Mrs. Piozzi's house] but his report was that it was the lower part of the street that had been destroyed. There the houses are in complete ruin. He did not think the upper part of the street had been seriously damaged."

Kenneth Sisam (Oxford Univ. Press), in a recent letter, makes an interesting observation about labor conditions in England. He says:

"Here man-power has been drained dry. So much has been done voluntarily that when compulsion is introduced it is often found that there is nothing left to pull in. For instance, there has been a registration of boys and girls from 16 to 18, in the hope of getting some extra war work there, but the result of investigation is that these ages are already working excessive hours which must be reduced. We cannot get anything more out of our pint pot."

E. S. de Beer writes that at the latest meeting of the Johnson Club L. F. Powell read an interesting paper on the new edition of Thraliana. And concerning this last, may we recommend to our readers two charming articles written by Raymond Mortimer in the New Statesman and Nation for May 23 and July 4. Mortimer admirably catches the spirit of Mrs. Piozzi and her rather wayward genius as a diarist.

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#### MEMBERS IN SERVICE

It is our intention in future numbers of the News Letter to devote a column to information about our members who have been called for active duty in the armed forces. Please send in any news you have of yourself or of friends who are being inducted.

Ned McAdam (N.Y.U.), one of the editors of Johnson's poetry, has been commissioned as a lieutenant in the Combat Intelligence branch of the Naval Air Force.

R.P. Bond (N.C.) is now a lieutenant in the Navy.

#### PROJECTS

The Library of Congress has begun the preparation of a catalogue of Thomas Jefferson's personal libraries, including the collection purchased by Congress in 1815 to replace the library lost in the burning of the Capitol. Miss E.M. Sowerby, formerly with the Rosenbach Co. is the editor. Allen Hazen (Hunter) helped plan the project during a month at the Library of Congress this past summer.

J. E. Tobin (Fordham) is preparing a checklist of Defoe items and attributions in some twenty-five North-American libraries. Work on the holdings of the Boston and N.Y. Public Libraries, Library of Congress, Indiana, Michigan, Newberry, Yale, Princeton, Penn, Columbia, and McGill has been completed, with considerable headway on others.

There will be no attempt to establish a Defoe canon, and no interference with any planned formal bibliography is intended. The project is merely the result of one of scores of problems which have arisen during the compilation of material for his S.T.C. 1700-1735, begun two years ago. The Defoe list, mimeographed, should be out in the spring.

Sarah L. C. Clapp (La. St. Normal) writes: "In the January issue of A Johnsonian News Letter A. L. Reade raises a problem connected with subscription books, on which I can speak feelingly, having encountered the difficulties he states. An index of subscribers would be of great service. The making of it would have been a noble task for N.Y.A. workers. The study of it would furnish forth graduate theses for years to come, as well as occupy the stray leisure of finished scholars.

"Meanwhile, the arrival of sundry additions to my files of subscription books has set me wondering about the desirability and possibility of circulating a check-



list of titles already accumulated. If enough persons cared to pay five or ten cents for mimeographing and postage, the list could go to those signifying a wish for it. Another way would be for either the seventeenth or the eighteenth century news letter to carry it, perhaps in instalments, as it would occupy at least twenty-five or thirty pages."

What do you say? Would you like to aid in checking this preliminary list? And what is the best method of circulation? Let us have your suggestions.

#### INFORMATION WE NEED

Any 18th century scholar who has worked with manuscript letters has undoubtedly been aware of the great need for an authoritative work dealing with postal procedures. An important article bearing on this question, written by R.W. Chapman, may be found in Notes & Queries for August 1. He explains much about the cost of sending letters, the abuse of the franking privilege, and the place at which letters were postmarked. But Chapman himself admits that he does not know much about the Acts of Parliament which govern the matter, or the special rules of the postal departments. Nor do we know specifically just why the date-stamp was placed on letters in London only, and not at the office of origin.

Certainly, exhaustive research into this matter would be well worth doing, for twentieth century editors, with their preoccupation with accurate chronology and dating, very much desire to know just what may be inferred from the postmarks. Accurate listing of the regular routes taken by the bags of mail, together with descriptions of the exact methods employed in the handling would be invaluable for all of us.

Won't someone give us a monograph on the subject, and settle all our questions?

Herbert Davis (Smith) sadly admits that it is not likely that his edition of Swift will progress materially for the duration. Being a college president in wartime (with the waves actually pounding at his door) leaves him few moments for research. He indicates that Louis Landa (Chicago) is to edit the sermons in volume IX.

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#### SOMERVILLE'S THE CHASE

We are reminded by an article in the T.L.S. for July 18 that this summer is the two hundredth anniversary of the death of William Somerville, author of that pleasant poem, The Chase. As the writer points out, "It sends out no Thoughts upon the Vast. It has no pensive melancholies, no dim-discovered spires.... It is plain, vivid, eloquent -- and earthy." Perhaps in these despairing days it is just the poem to re-read.

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G. S. Alleman's (Wallingford, Pa.) recently published Matrimonial Law and the Materials of Restoration Comedy should be a useful tool for all teachers of the drama. It is also an interesting sample of the effective use of charts, when combined with a serviceable index, in the discussion of dramatic situations. We are inclined to suspect that tables and charts are not used as much as they might be in technical literary works.

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#### THE NEW RAMBLER NO. 3

A copy of the July, 1942, issue of the little mimeographed sheet which Frederick Vernon edits for the Johnson Society of London has just reached us. This last number runs to 16 pages and contains 8 short articles, in addition to numerous notes, some culled from our own News Letter. We are sure Vernon will welcome any inquiries about The New Rambler from persons on this side of the Atlantic. His

address is Walnut Tree Cottage, Ramsden, Oxford.

The table of contents for this last issue is as follows: "Johnson and War" by Lord Justice F.D. MacKinnon; "Johnson and Brighton" by Dr. J.L. Smith-Dampier; "Johnson's London" by Dr. R. W. Chapman; "A Forgotten Tombstone" by Rev. A. Cunningham-Burley; "The Stonebreaker's Recollections" by H. W. Bromhead; "Some Medical Men, Dr. Richard Mead (part I)" by W.E. Havart; "The Dawdle Papers II" by The Dawdler; and "Longevity in the Johnson Circle" by W. E. Havart.

Lord Justice MacKinnon, in his article, quotes an interesting passage about war from Johnson's pamphlet on the Falkland's Islands. Since some may be not too familiar with this particular work, we venture to repeat the section here: (Works, 1825, VI, 199)

"The life of a modern soldier is ill represented by heroic fiction. War has means of destruction more formidable than the cannon and the sword. Of the thousands and ten thousands, that perished in our late contests with France and Spain, a very small part ever felt the stroke of an enemy; the rest languished in tents and ships, amidst damps and putrefaction; pale, torpid, spiritless, and helpless; gasping and groaning, unpitied among men, made obdurate by long continuance of hopeless misery; and were, at last, whelmed in pits, or heaved into the ocean, without notice and without remembrance. By inconvenient encampments and unwholesome stations, where courage is useless, and enterprise impracticable, fleets are silently dispeopled, and armies sluggishly melted away.

"Thus is a people gradually exhausted, for the most part, with little effect. The wars of civilized nations make very slow changes in the system of empire...."

We wonder if Johnson today would find war only slowly changing the system of empire.

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A very entertaining and sparkling little book -- not at all concerned with the eternal verities of literature, to be sure, but interesting just the same -- is A. C. Jones's The Clubs of the Georgian Rakes. Recently published, it tells of the famous impious clubs of the 18th century -- the Medmenham Monks, the Beefsteaks, the Demoniacs, the Beggar's Benison and others.

Among numerous amusing anecdotes there is the story of the duel between Sir Jonah Barrington and a fellow lawyer named Leonard M'Nally. The latter, a rather unethical, shifty fellow, had challenged various members of the bar because they refused to let him eat with them when on the circuit. Everyone refused until he came to Barrington, who "more out of pity than malice -- he makes this very clear -- agreed to meet him. The affair ended happily enough when Barrington hit M'Nally in such a way that his suspenders were shot in two, giving one of the seconds an opportunity for an almost classic pun, 'By Jassus, Mac! you are the only rogue I ever knew that was saved by the gallows.'"

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Occasionally, as you know, we like to toss out debatable topics, in the hope of stirring up some readers to send in their comments. For instance, to what extent did Dr. Johnson affect the course of common English prose? Can we discover any change in prose style which can be definitely ascribed to his influence? Wimsatt, in his thorough study, The Prose Style of Samuel Johnson, which everyone should read, is not too certain of any permanent influence. What do you think? Have you any further arguments to advance?

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We hope all subscribers will keep us informed as to any changes of address, so that the News Letter may not be lost en route.